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Take severe weather seriously

17 December 2007

John Hirst, Chief Executive of the Met Office, today welcomes the findings of Sir Michael Pitt's Interim Report on the floods of summer 2007 and in particular the recommendations for better, more joined up working between all those involved in flood prediction, prevention, response and recovery.

John Hirst says: "The Met Office is a global leader in forecasting the weather and the impact of climate change. We provided accurate forward warnings of exceptionally heavy rainfall in the days running up to the summer floods. Nevertheless, we strongly welcome any recommendations to further improve the precision and timeliness of our advice, and so help our partners in flood prediction and response best deal with exceptional weather and its impacts.

"The exceptionally severe weather this summer has shown that the current warnings system is unnecessarily disjointed, separating forecasts of extreme rainfall from what happens to that excess water once it enters an already swollen river system or causes flash floods. By fully integrating the forecasting of all types of flood hazard we would provide a more complete and precise picture for those tasked with protecting homes, businesses and vital infrastructure in the case of extreme weather events."

The Met Office welcomes the finding that the impacts of severe weather should be taken seriously. As the nations official weather forecaster we provide both warnings of severe weather and advice on its impacts to a wide variety of audiences, including the public, local authorities and government.

Our network of Public Weather Advisers are on call to interpret the weather message and continuously provide support and advice to the emergency services.

John Hirst continues: "The UK has unparalleled expertise at its disposal within the Met Office, all of which could play a vital role in a future approach to flood hazard warning. Our aim in the future is to be able to better pinpoint severe rainfall, providing more accurate forecasts further in advance."

For further information:

Met Office Press Office +44 (0)1392 886655
E-mail: pressoffice@metoffice.gov.uk

Met Office Customer Centre 0870 900 0100
If you're outside the UK +44 (0)1392 885680